

Freedom of Information Request Reference

- **Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please can you provide separate information for each of your hospitals/facilities providing mental health inpatient services:**

1. Is the hospital smokefree (i.e. does not allow smoking anywhere on hospital grounds) and, if yes, what date did this happen?

A smoking ban in hospitals in N Ireland was put in place in 2016. At that time the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) implemented a smoking policy. This policy sets out the position that smoking is banned in health and social care premises and in the grounds of health and social care premises. The policy further states that "In circumstances, where to insist on 'no smoking' could result in violence or aggression against staff or add to the distress of service users, relatives or carers, staff members will need to exercise a degree of flexibility. " In practice this has meant that any patient admitted to one of our mental health inpatient units who strongly wishes to smoke can do so outside of the ward environment without the need to go AWOL from the hospital grounds.

2. How many patients/service users have absconded/gone AWOL while on leave for each calendar year since 2000? By "leave" I mean a period of time outside the hospital grounds approved by a member of staff. For example, it might be several hours or 15 minutes for some fresh air, escorted by two nurses. I'd be looking for information on those who fail to return when expected, while on such leave.

This information is only available on the Trust's information system from 2017/18 to December 2019 and relates to absconded incidents recorded by the Trust for Holywell Hospital and Ross Thomson Unit.

2017/18 – 249

2018/19 – 302

April 2019 – December 2019 - 230

3. Of these, how many patients/service users have absconded/gone AWOL while on leave to have a cigarette or where the report mentions cigarettes for each calendar year since 2000?

4. When looking at all incident reports (not just those in which a patient absconded), how many incident reports mentioned "smoking", "smoke", "cigarette" or "lighter" a) in 2017, b) in 2018 and c) in 2019?

In terms of mentions of cigarette and smoking in incident reports/absconded AWOLs this could not be provided as there are many hundreds of incident reports each year and these would have to be gone through manually for the information sought. Therefore the Trust is applying Section 12 (1) of the FOIA, which states that a public authority is not obliged to comply with a request, if the staff time taken to determine whether the information is held, locating, retrieving and extracting the information, would exceed 18 hours (at a cost exceeding £450).